

REEF RESCUE

2012

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Les and Paul Durnsford

Improved Farming System using Controlled Traffic and Zonal Tillage Operations

Reef Rescue helped Les and Paul Durnsford to adopt new management practices on their farm including a controlled traffic system with zonal tillage operations. With the funding, Les and Paul were able to modify their existing equipment and purchase some new equipment to match their new system they are implementing.

In 2006, Les and Paul made the decision to convert their farm into a controlled traffic system with 1.83 m rows. Now, in 2012, 95% of the farm has been converted to the new system. With the support of Reef Rescue they have modified all of their equipment to match the 1.83 m row spacing, including their planter and spray rigs.

“In 2009 we needed to put in a harvester elevator extension and purchased a GPS which we would not have been able to do without Reef Rescue support,” Paul explained. Now, in 2012, with some of their original wide row plantings going into fallow, they have purchased a 3-row zonal rotary hoe so that they can reduce the area needing to be cultivated and hopefully the number of times they

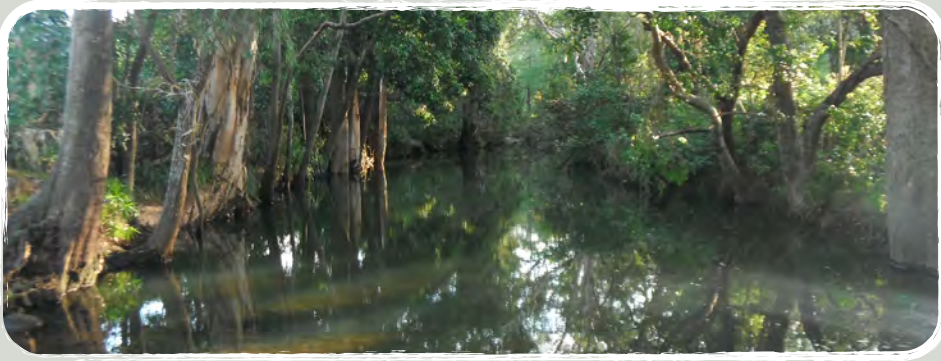
need to drive up and down the paddocks. Not only does this save dollars but can improve soil structure and reduce the risk of soil being exposed during rainfall events. Down the track Paul said he would like to be able to put a GPS in the harvester as well to finish off the system. “So hopefully Reef Rescue continues,” he added.

Les and Paul have implemented other activities to improve management practices across the farm. They have modified their spray rig to include Irvin Legs so that they can do a directed spray of residual chemicals in under the canopy and reduce the total amount applied while still providing good control. “With any inputs on the farm such as chemical or fertiliser applications, either



About the farm...

Les and Paul are 2nd and 3rd generation cane farmers who own a farm near Yalbaroo, around 60 km North West of Mackay. The 400 ha farm was bought in 1928 and originally was all cattle. They currently have 300 ha under cane with a few cows left on the areas not able to be cultivated. The farm is cut in half by the Bruce Highway with Mt Catherine one of the stand out features in the landscape. The farm is part of the Blackrock Creek sub-catchment, but has Catherine, Beatrice, Nota Bean and Alligator Creeks flowing through it before they all come together as Black Rock Creek below their property.



Alligator Creek

granular or liquid, we like to incorporate them with irrigation as soon as possible as we see this makes a real difference," Paul said. "This also reduces the risk of losses in run-off as it can be incorporated into the soil and we make sure our soil stays in the paddock," he added.

Les and Paul used Reef Rescue to purchase a new hard hose irrigator with an automated computer control system to help

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with the incorporation process. "The computer controls mean that we can program in the amount of time and water that is put out and so can match soil type to irrigation amount very accurately," Paul said.

This can help them save water and reduce the chance of any run-off from over irrigation. "We also like to harvest with moisture so that we don't need to irrigate straight away and can wait till we need to incorporate inputs," Paul added.



OUTCOMES



Reduced risk of chemical losses with accurate and effective applications



Reduced risk of sediment losses with minimum tillage system



Reduced risk of losses from improving irrigation efficiency and incorporating inputs

Reef Catchments

Reef Catchments is the regional NRM body who oversees the Reef Rescue program in the Mackay Whitsunday region for the federal government.

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